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ABSTRACT

The International Baccalaureate (IB), a 2-year diploma program for students aged 16-19, gives access to higher education on a world-wide basis; it also allows for various national education systems. The program is available in English, French, and Spanish. It is supervised by the IB organization, a non-profit educational foundation with headquarters in Geneva. Today, IB examinations are offered in almost 100 countries, and there are some 750 IB schools. The IB Diploma can be displayed in the shape of a hexagon. Two of the subject groups that constitute the curriculum are made up of languages, with various options. Language A1 (mother-tongue program) is compulsory for all candidates. The other language courses available are A2, B and Ab initio. Language A2 is chosen by highly competent speakers of the language. Language B is intended for non-native students who have some previous experience of that language, whereas no previous experience is required for an Ab initio language program. This article discusses the IB language program at large, and to some extent the Finnish adaptation to it. (Author/VWL)

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The International Baccalaureate (IB), a two-year diploma programme for students aged 16 –19, gives access to higher education on a world-wide basis; it also allows for various national education systems. The programme is available in English, French and Spanish. It is supervised by the IB Organisation, a non-profit educational foundation with headquarters in Geneva. Today IB examinations are offered in almost 100 countries, and there are some 750 IB schools.

The IB Diploma can be displayed in the shape of a hexagon. Two of the six subject groups that constitute the curriculum are made up of languages, with various options. Language A1 ("mother tongue programme") is compulsory for all candidates. The other language courses available are A2, B and Ab initio. Language A2 is chosen by highly competent speakers of the language. Language B is intended for non-native students who have some previous experience of that language, whereas no previous experience is required for an Ab initio language programme. My interest in the IB programme is due to my work as Examiner for Language B Finnish. The present paper discusses the IB language programme at large, and to some extent the Finnish adaptation of it.

Keywords: International Baccalaureate (IB), Diploma programme, Language B Finnish, Ministry of Education

The **International Baccalaureate** (IB) provides a pre-university curriculum for students aged 16–19 in the final two years of secondary school. A complete Diploma programme gives access to higher education on a world-wide basis; it is the student's "international passport" to academic studies. However, the programme also allows the candidates to fulfill requirements of various national education systems. It is not based on the pattern of any single country but incorporates elements from many. The programme – and the examination – is available in English, French and Spanish.

In this paper I will describe the IB language programme and also its Finnish adaptation, for instance how the Finnish curriculum with compulsory Finnish and Swedish – the country's two national languages – fits into the IB system. I will discuss the programme for Finnish B in some detail,

including instruction, exams, grades, results etc. Most of the facts in my paper derive from various IB sources, namely, booklets, brochures and guides intended for IB students, teachers or examiners. What I report is the gist of what I have gained from these sources, a sort of integrated knowledge. This is why I do not always refer to a specific source; the (official) IB sources which I have used for information are listed in the References as "IB Guides". In case other kinds of sources – newspaper articles, reports, letters – have been used I have indicated the source. Naturally, much of the inside information also results from my personal contacts with the organisation; from seminars, workshops, meetings with Finnish IB teachers, etc.

1 INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE ORGANISATION (IBO)

The IB programme is supervised by the IB Organisation (IBO), a non-profit foundation with headquarters in Geneva. The governing body of the IBO is a 30-member Council of Foundation consisting of representatives of national governments, heads of IB schools and international educators. The former Vice President of the Council, Bengt Thelin of Täby, Sweden, has been serving as its President since 1996 (IBO News Release, 1996). The IBO has consultative status with the Council of Europe and with UNESCO. The organisation was founded in the 1960s by educators who believed that international education would lead to inter-cultural understanding among young people. In 1967 the organization adopted its present name (International Baccalaureate).

The organisation has its Curriculum and Assessment Centre (IBCA) in Cardiff, Wales. There are regional offices in Buenos Aires, Geneva, New York and Singapore as well as regional representatives in Amman (Jordan), Bombay (India), Double Bay (Australia), Mexico City, Nairobi (Kenya), Singapore, Stockholm (Sweden), and Yokohama (Japan). The Stockholm office has responsibility for IB schools in Central/Eastern Europe and the Nordic countries.

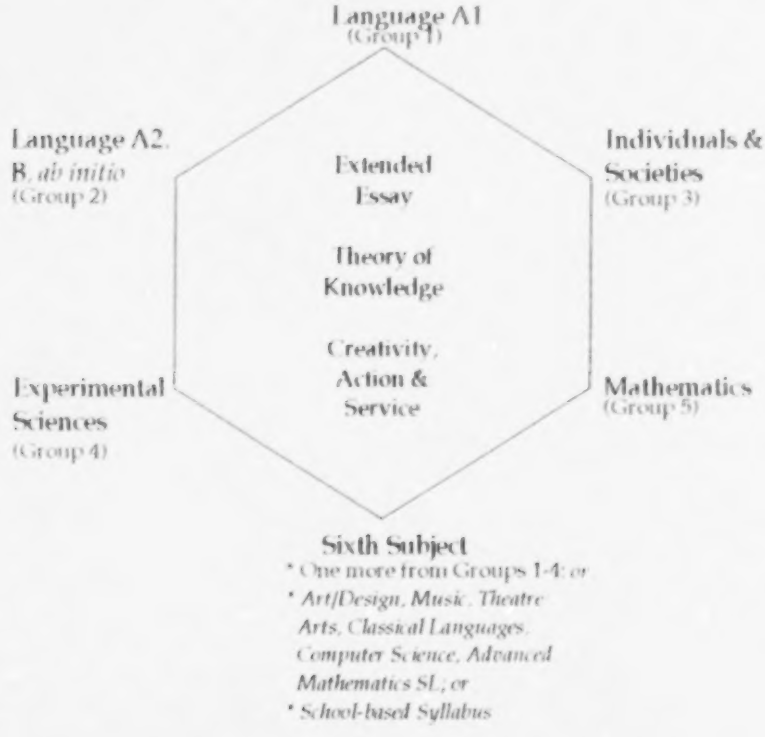
In the thirty years of its existence the IB has grown rapidly. While some 50 countries offered IB examinations in 1990, the countries involved were 85 in 1996, with some 630 participating schools worldwide. In early 1997 the number had risen to 721 schools in 91 countries; the Nordic countries have today 36 schools altogether, 8 of them in Finland (12 in Sweden). The IB has faced new requirements which were unforeseen at the beginning. The programme – from the start a service to the international community – now embraces member schools in national systems; today more than half of the participating schools are from state or public sectors.

In 1992 the Middle Years Programme (MYP) was added, designed for students aged 11–16. This programme can be offered in any language. With an educational philosophy found in the original IB programme, the 5-year curriculum for younger students serves as preparation for the Diploma programme. In 1996 there were 45 schools with the MYP, among them one in Finland (Turun Normaalikoulu). The programme for younger students is not a prerequisite, however, and schools are free to subscribe to one or both of the two programmes. Even a curriculum for the primary school was to be introduced in late 1996.

2 IB DIPLOMA CURRICULUM AND LANGUAGE PROGRAMME

The IB Diploma can be displayed in the shape of a hexagon with six academic disciplines surrounding the core (see the figure below). Subjects are studied concurrently and students are exposed to both the humanities and the sciences. The six subject groups that constitute the curriculum of the IB Diploma are made up of Languages (1 and 2), Individuals and Societies (3), Experimental Sciences (4), Mathematics (5) and a miscellaneous group called Arts and Electives (6).

The IB Diploma curriculum (IB Languages Programme Outlines, 1995)



The students are required to select one subject from each of the six groups. At least three but not more than four are taken at Higher Level (HL), the rest at Standard Level (SL). HL courses require 240 teaching hours, SL ones 150. Some subjects are explored in depth, some more broadly – a compromise between the early specialisation of some national systems and the breadth of some others. As for the subject groups there are definite distribution requirements, with overall balance maintained.

The IB programme has some unique characteristics. The Extended Essay, Theory of Knowledge (TOK) and Creativity, Action and Service (CAS) are essential requirements for the Diploma (see the middle of the hexagon in the figure). Every Diploma student must undertake original research and write an extended essay of some 4,000 words. The essay may be submitted as a language essay, written in the student's Language B, or as a literature essay, written in Language A1. TOK is an interdisciplinary course that encourages students to beware of biases – subjective or ideological – and to develop an evidence-based way of thinking. CAS requires the student to spend the equivalent of one half-day a week on some form of CAS activity, like theatre, sports, community service etc. This develops ability to cooperate even outside classroom.

The extensive language programme includes four levels, ranging from native-speaker proficiency to elementary, i. e. from A1 to Ab initio. **Language A1** is compulsory for all Diploma candidates and it is normally the candidate's best language (mother tongue). The main focus is the study of literature, and selections from World Literature are an integral part of the programme. If an IB school has students with mother tongues other than the school's principal language of instruction and the school cannot offer qualified tuition in those mother tongues, supervision[6] may be available via e-mail.

Two languages are compulsory for the Diploma but many IB candidates choose to study a third (sometimes a fourth) language. For a second language the students can select either another literature programme (another Language A1) or a second/foreign language programme (A2, B or Ab initio); in other words, Language A1 can be combined with any of the courses A1, A2, B or Ab initio.

Language A2 (near-native speaker programme) is chosen by highly competent speakers of the language. The A2 option is a newly established programme which only exists in a dozen languages so far; teaching in

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[1] The students can study their Language A1 by registering for the so-called NEON-Links, i. e. Native-Language Essays on the Net (Allan 1995), whereby they will be assisted by teachers at their own school. In 1996 four European IB schools started a pilot project on this type of supervision and applied for an EU grant through the Socrates Foundation. One of the four participating schools was Oulun Lyseon lukio in Finland.

Swedish A2 was started at two schools in Sweden in the autumn of 1997, and there are plans for Finnish A2. **Language B** is intended for non-native students who have some previous experience of that language, whereas no previous experience is required for an **Ab initio** language programme. The programmes A1, A2 and B have courses at Higher and Standard Level, Ab initio only at Standard Level. The entire language programme was recently reformed, with the new system tested in pilot examinations. In 1995 pilot examinations were offered in a number of Languages B, after which the new Language B programme was established and examined 1996. In May 1996 Languages A2 and Ab initio were offered as open pilot subjects.

The international character of the IB can be seen in the variety of languages chosen as a second or foreign language. In 1996 there were 25 Languages B offered, taken by over 3,000 students at Higher Level and over 7,000 students at Standard Level, altogether nearly 11,000 students. The Languages B with the greatest number of candidates were French, English and Spanish, in this order, with 2,400–3,500 candidates in each. German, with nearly 1,000 candidates, was the fourth. Finnish B had 20 candidates in 1996, and 17 in 1997, while seven languages had fewer candidates than that, most of them rather "exotic" (Hebrew, Hindi, Pilipino, Bengali etc.). The open pilot exams of May 1996 were offered in nine Languages A2 and equally many Ab initio. The number of candidates was nearly 1,300 for A2 and just under 600 for Ab initio.

3 IB EXAMS AND IB DIPLOMA

The examinations are the same for all IB candidates irrespective of geography. The examinations are arranged in May and in November, with the May session serving the large majority of candidates (the smaller November session is taken by schools in the southern hemisphere). The examinations are organised by an Examining Board responsible for the setting of question papers and for the awarding of grades. Many Chief Examiners are university teachers of various nationalities, and they are assisted by a team of assistant examiners in different countries. Responsibility for assessing student work is shared by nearly 3,000 examiners worldwide. The examination administration is handled by the IBCA in Cardiff. External examinations are complemented by internal assessment of coursework by the teachers of the national IB schools.

The grading system used by the IBO is criterion-referenced. Each student's performance is measured against well-defined levels of achievement. Grades are not awarded "on a Gauss curve", they rather reflect knowledge and skills relative to set standards which are applied to all schools. Let us take an example. When a candidate's paper, say Written Production in

Language B, is assessed by an examiner, three separate criteria have to be used; criterion A for Task/Message, B for Presentation, and C for Language. Each of the three criteria, A, B and C, has descriptors stating what is required for the five mark bands (1/2, 3/4, 5/6, 7/8 and 9/10). A student may score 10 for each of the three criteria (30 altogether), but might as well score 7 or 8 for the first two criteria (Task and Presentation) and then either have the highest score, 10, or a low score, say 5, for Language. The three scores together will make up the sum, say 19 or 26 out of 30. The same student will have to take two more tests in Language B (Text-handling and Oral Component), and these, too, have their own specific criteria A, B and C. The score of all the three tests will be summed up and weighted on a worldwide scale until the final grade (1–7) for Language B is awarded.

Each of the six examined subjects is graded on a scale of 1 to 7 plus possible N (No Grade Issued) and P (Result Pending). The grades 1–7 are interpreted as follows:

1 = Very Poor
2 = Poor
3 = Mediocre
4 = Satisfactory
5 = Good
6 = Very good
7 = Excellent

The IB Diploma will be awarded to students who meet defined standards, including a minimum total of 24 points (6 subjects with Grade 4, i.e. 'Satisfactory') and the satisfactory completion of the Extended Essay, a TOK (Theory of Knowledge) course and CAS (Creativity, Action and Service) activities. The maximum score is 45 points, i.e. 42 points for the six subjects plus three bonus points for an exceptional essay and work in TOK. Those who fail in some areas or choose to take fewer than six subjects are awarded a certificate for examinations completed. Normally 70–75 % of all the students who attempt the Diploma earn it each year, which means that the failing percentage is 25–30 (the corresponding figure for those who take the national matriculation exam in Finland is 4–5 %).

IB Diploma holders gain admission to selective universities worldwide. These include such institutions as Cambridge and Oxford in Great Britain, Brown, Columbia, Harvard, MIT, Princeton, Stanford and Yale in the USA, Heidelberg in Germany, the Sorbonne in France and Toronto in Canada. Some colleges and universities even offer course credits to students with strong IB examination results. The first three universities to accept IB Diploma holders in the late 1960s were Harvard, Oxford and the Sorbonne; Brown University was one of the first colleges to accord credit for IB work.

4 INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE IN FINLAND

The IB programme has been offered in Finland since 1990 (in Sweden the first IB school was accepted 1977, the second 1981). The Committee for organising the Finnish IB programme, appointed by the Ministry of Education in September 1989, submitted its report to the Ministry in early 1990 (see References). The Committee commented on the IB Diploma programme, comparing it to the national education system. Questions such as eligibility criteria for students to enroll in the programme and recognition of the IB Diploma as an entrance qualification at Finnish universities were discussed in the report. The Committee pointed out that a pre-university curriculum in English was badly needed in Finland and suggested that an experimental IB line of study be launched in the fall of 1990 at two schools (Finnish and Swedish) in the Helsinki region. The first IB year was to be a preparatory period, a kind of pre-IB, and essentially identical with the first year of the national 3-year baccalaureate programme. Finnish students would thus start the two-year IB Diploma programme after completing a one-year pre-IB.

The IB experiment began at Suomalainen Yhteiskoulu, Helsinki, and Mattlidens Gymnasium, Espoo, in 1990. These schools were followed by Turun Normaalikoulu and the International School of Helsinki (1991), by Oulun Lyseon lukio, Tampereen Lyseon lukio and Vasa övningsskola (1992), and by Kuopion Lyseon lukio (1994). Thus, the number of IB schools in Finland is eight at the moment. The first Finnish IB candidates earned their IB Diploma in 1993, but prior to that the urgent problem of ensuring the IB Diploma holders access to Finnish universities had to be solved. The 1991 statute had made the IB Diploma equivalent with the national matriculation examination, with identical university entrance requirements as a result.

The IB Diploma programme at Finnish IB schools follows the IBO guidelines, with some national adjustments. Because Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish, a knowledge of both has been obligatory, even for IB students. A candidate with Finnish as his/her mother tongue and, in most cases, as his/her Language A1, would choose Swedish (as Language B) under the electives of the sixth group of the Diploma curriculum. English would normally also be studied as Language B. An extra (seventh) subject may also be included in order to fulfill the Finnish national requirements. This allows for a fourth language, e.g. German or French.

In order to allow for more alternatives within the six subject groups the position of Finland's second national language at IB schools was discussed by the follow-up Committee in 1993. The discussions led to a decision taken by the Ministry of Education on the matter in May 1993, and a letter of information was sent to the IB schools (see References). The new regulations made it possible to select a subject other than Finnish or Swedish from the sixth group of the curriculum. If an IB school decided to allow for this it had to

ensure the candidates' knowledge of the country's second national language by intensifying instruction during the candidates' pre-IB year. Thereby their knowledge was to reach the standard of students who had completed their first two years of national baccalaureate programme.

The radical 1996 reforms of the IB language programme also changed routines at Finnish IB schools (see next chapter). Neither Finnish nor Swedish IB teachers participated in the pilot exams for Languages B in 1995. Instead, the IBO organized a training workshop for Nordic IB teachers in Stockholm in the autumn of 1995. The May 1996 exams were the first offered according to the new system and were, understandably, awaited with some apprehension by teachers and students.

5 ON LANGUAGE B (FINNISH)

An important feature of the Language B programme, according to the Language B Guide, is communicativeness and interaction, i. e. preparing the students to use the language in different contexts and for a variety of purposes. Study of a wide range of authentic oral and written texts of different styles and registers is undertaken in order to develop the four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing. An equal emphasis is placed on all four. The four language skills are integrated, so for instance, assessment of oral skills is supposed to be integrated into regular classroom activities, and instruction in grammatical structures into the study of themes and texts. An example of interaction and the integrating of the four skills was offered by a Finnish B teacher at a recent workshop. Her suggestion for working on a theme in class included the following succession of activities: seeing a film/play on the theme together (listening and reading) -> ensemble discussion in class, possibly with newspaper clippings at hand (speaking and listening) -> individual student presentation (speaking, writing, listening) -> written paper (writing) -> group orals (speaking).

The objectives of the language programme are social, academic and cultural; among the academic objectives is the student's ability to "enter into discussions and debates and defend opinions", among the cultural the ability to "demonstrate, through the study of a variety of texts and through social interaction, an awareness and appreciation of the different perspectives of people from other cultures" (see Language B Guide, 1994). The syllabus is based on the three objectives and the individual programmes on three course themes, namely, exploring Change, Groups, and Leisure. Teachers are free to choose their own written/oral texts linked to one or more of the three themes. Types of text may include literary, informative or journalistic texts, but even other kinds, such as letters, ads, catalogues, videos, travel brochures and so on are recommended. The Language B Guide gives detailed guide-

lines on how the four language skills can be developed through activities and exercises. The following aspects are trained: Listening and Oral Activity, Text-handling (Written Text), and Written Production, and these skills will be examined and assessed for the Diploma. In order to help students to evaluate their own progress the Assessment Criteria are to be made available to them from the beginning of the course.

After the reformation of the language programme in 1995–96 the Language B programme became in essence a pure "language" programme, in contrast to the Language A1 (mother tongue) option, which focuses on literature. Previously, Language B was in fact more or less a copy of the A1 programme, although easier. The Language B course does include study of literature even today, but literature is seen as one among several text types. Reading a few entire novels in Language B is encouraged, and at Higher Level a literary text is one option in the Text-handling part of the exam; a literary topic will also be provided as one of the six tasks in the Written Production part of the exam.

My interest in the IB language programme derives mainly from my work as Examiner for Language B Finnish since 1995. The duties of an examiner for Finnish (or *mutatis mutandis* for any language) include setting and marking the examination papers, attending seminars and other meetings arranged by the IBCA, and, when need be, organizing briefings and training workshops for the IB teachers of Finland – often together with their Nordic colleagues. IB teachers worldwide are regularly invited to subject-specific workshops held in different countries.

Out of my twenty Finnish B candidates in May 1996 five had chosen Higher Level and fifteen Standard. In 1997 the corresponding figures were six and eleven. The number of candidates varies from year to year, depending on several factors (students may, for instance, take ordinary school exams in the Finnish language in order to be able to include another subject of their choice in their Diploma curriculum). Not all students who take Finnish as their Language B live in Finland even if most of them do. In 1996 the schools of five of my twenty candidates were in Australia, Austria, Denmark, Holland and Japan, and in 1997 I received papers from Ireland and Switzerland. This "foreign" category includes children of emigrants, mixed marriages, Embassy staff and the like. A majority of those living in Finland attend Swedish schools. Cassette recordings from Oral sessions as well as the Written Production papers of Language B candidates give an examiner a good idea of how much and in what way these young people have been exposed to Finnish, whether it has only been in class or outside class as well. These factors will be reflected in the candidates' discourse and choice of subject-matter. The starting-point for a two-year curriculum of Finnish B is not identical for a candidate in Finland and one in Australia or Japan.

The **Oral Component** was formerly assessed externally, by examiners who came to IB schools to interview the candidates and record the interviews for assessment. What was new after the reformation of the language programme in 1996 was the internal assessment format including several types of activities, e.g. Individual Orals vs. Group or Paired Orals, and Prepared vs. Unprepared Orals. The Assessment Criteria were also renewed; the three criteria for assessing oral skills are A for Task/Message, B for Interaction, and C for Language (cf. criteria for Written Production in the chapter "IB Exams and IB Diploma"). In the new system only samples of candidates' Individual Orals, internally assessed, have to be sent to the external examiner for moderation (a 10-minute cassette recording per candidate is required). The tapes are to contain the student's presentation on a topic, with a conversation based on it as well as a more general discussion between the candidate and the teacher. The examiner will listen through the cassettes, assess them according to the descriptors supplied, and write down his or her grades. Then the examiner will compare these with the grades suggested by the schools and check whether anything has to be altered. Moderation is of vital importance in order to make sure that candidates from different schools and countries are assessed on the same scale.

Text-handling or Paper 1 was a new form of assessment in 1996. The Finnish B Text-handling papers (HL and SL) of May 1996 and May 1997 contained four authentic texts (3–5 texts are required) and a variety of tasks intended to test the candidates' skills in understanding and using written information. This required skimming and scanning, extensive and intensive reading. Vocabulary and grammatical structures were tested, as well as – at Higher Level only – some ability to interpret literary material. The time allowed for this exam is 90 minutes. Thus, in fact, Text-handling also tests whether the candidate is a quick reader.

Written Production or Paper 2 offers six tasks to choose from. Only one or two of these are essays, the other tasks request the candidates to write reviews, brochures, sets of guidelines or instructions, letters, interviews and so on. One of the tasks at both levels is preferably linked to a text in the Text-handling part of the exam. It should be mentioned that the candidates complete both the papers on the same day, i. e. 1.5 hours plus 1.5 hours, so when writing their Paper 2 tasks they still have the texts of Paper 1 in fresh memory. The exams in Languages B take place in early May. The examiners have four weeks to mark the papers, after which they will have to submit various reports, analyse and compare student results, suggest model samples of student work as training material for new examiners, and evaluate the work of the IB schools that their Diploma candidates attend.

6 FINLAND'S DIPLOMA HOLDERS IN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

In August 1992 the Ministry of Education requested the Finnish universities to report on any guidelines for their admission of IB Diploma holders. The 1992 follow-up Committee for the Finnish IB experiment went through the answers from the universities and found that the special status of the IB Diploma had not been recognised in Finland (Committee's letter to the Ministry of Education, September 22, 1992). Most universities expected the IB students to pass the normal entrance examinations. With their own Diploma examinations in May, that is to say several weeks later than the national matriculation examinations, the IB students lost many weeks of preparatory reading for the entrance exams. They were also unable to participate in any preparatory courses for such exams arranged in the spring time.

The follow-up Committee referred to the comparison made between the IB Diploma and the national examination and quoted the results. Especially the Higher Level programmes offered by the IB were more advanced than corresponding national courses, and the IB programme included elements normally found at university level. Summing up, the follow-up Committee concluded that even an IB Diploma completed with the minimum grades required a substantial knowledge. The Committee suggested that some individual admission criteria be added to the traditional ones regarding IB Diploma holders (for instance a high score in a subject closely related to the candidate's requested line of study, the candidate's skills and working habits resembling those expected at university level or the Extended Essay based on independent research).

Not much has changed in Finland up to the present day. No credit has been given for an IB Diploma at university entrance examinations, even if the achievement of Finland's IB students has gained international recognition. The follow-up Committee of the Finnish IB experiment compared the Diploma grades awarded to six Finnish IB schools in the years 1993-1995 with the average IB grades worldwide; the Committee even looked at the May 1996 examinations in Finland. In September 1996 Finland's major daily newspaper, the Helsingin Sanomat, presented fresh statistics in an article by Irma Stenbäck, with the title "Suomen IB-ylioppilaat tilastoissa maailman huipputasoa" ("Finnish IB students top the world's grade statistics"). The article had a subtitle reading "IB-tutkinnosta ei tipu lisäpisteitä Suomen sisäänpääsykokeissa" ("The IB examination gives no credit at Finnish entrance examinations"). What was interesting about the report was that 32 and 34 per cent of the Finnish IB students had the highest grade, 7, in Languages A1 and B respectively, while the means of other IB candidates were 11 and 13. On the whole, approximately one fourth of the grades scored by the Finns

consisted of 7s, whereas the percentage was 9 for the IB worldwide. The difference was clear even in other subjects.

Parallel to praise, there has been occasional criticism of the IB in Finland.[2] A rather negative view was expressed by an English lecturer at Åbo Academy, Christopher Grapes, in the Åbo Underrättelser, January 11, 1997. Grapes mostly criticized IB schools for having content taught in English by non-native teachers. His criticism was rejected in the paper's January 25 issue by two IB experts, Zoe Pohjanvirta, representative of the Finnish Ministry of Education, and Monica Flodman, Regional Director for the IB in Europe, Stockholm, who referred to the recent IB statistics and the good Finnish standard on a worldwide scale. In its issue of October 7, 1996, the University of Helsinki Newsletter YLIOPISTO commented on the "High-standard IB Students" ("Tasokkaita IB-ylioppilaita") in its section for Academic News in Brief (p. 40).

7 FURTHER OPTIONS IN THE FUTURE

What was reported by the Helsingin Sanomat on the overall top results of the Finnish IB students is also true of the Language B candidates I examined in 1996 and 1997. In 1996 the mean of the HL candidates was 6.80 (of 7.0) and the year after 6.83, while the SL candidates scored 6.77 and 6.82 respectively. The final grade covered the three skills, Oral Component, Text-handling, and Written Production. The candidates' final grades in Finnish B consisted, with few exceptions, of 6s and 7s. Those candidates who had chosen Higher Level seemed to have a native or near-native proficiency in Finnish, and I would judge them to be bilingual. Even half of the Standard Level candidates displayed a near-native command of Finnish.

The candidates' proficiency in Finnish clearly indicated to what extent they had been exposed to this language in their living environment. If a student was not exposed to Finnish outside classroom, Finnish B was a "foreign" language to him – as it should be according to the IB curriculum. Candidates who scored lower than 6 were likely to live outside Finland or, if they did live in Finland, the Swedish language was widely used for communication in the home community. This kind of diversity in the students' language proficiency raises an important issue; the genuinely bilingual IB

[2] A critical article also appeared in the Swedish Aftonbladet on April 18, 1997, under the title of "Skolan för elitens barn". The writer, Magnus Ringman, accused the IB School of Stockholm of elitism for not accepting "ordinary" Swedish youngsters.

students should actually be studying Finnish at a higher level than Language B allows for.

For the time being, an A2 option is not available at Finnish IB schools although a suggestion was put forth at the Nordic workshop in Oslo, September 1997. With Swedish A2 introduced at two IB schools in Sweden in the autumn of 1997, a natural consequence would be to introduce Finnish A2 in the near future. The next Nordic workshop is planned to take place in Finland in 1999, and by that time the planning stage for a Finnish A2 programme ought to be complete. Half or more of the candidates who choose Finnish B today would in that case most certainly choose a near-native language programme, A2, instead of a foreign language programme, B. The A2 option would be more of a challenge to the bilingual candidates of Finland as well as to those whose family live abroad but whose home language is Finnish.

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